

Automotive Maintenance Problems

Many common car maintenance routines contribute to water pollution. Washing the car or pouring used motor oil into a gutter or storm drain pollutes our waterways.

Water runoff from streets, parking lots and driveways pick up oil and grease dripped from cars, asbestos worn from brake linings, zinc from tires and organic compounds and metals from spilled fuels. These chemicals drain into our waterways, harming aquatic life.

Oil and grease, for example, clog fish gills and block oxygen from entering the water. If oxygen levels in the water become too low, aquatic animals die.

Solutions

Best Management Practices that include the proper handling, storage and disposal of materials can prevent pollutants from entering waterways through the storm drain system.



Stormwater BMPs: Solutions for Automotive Maintenance

Cleaning Work Sites

Do not hose down your shop floor. It is best to sweep regularly. For more information about proper disposal of industrial waste, call your local water management district.

Use non-toxic cleaning products. Baking soda paste works well on battery heads, cable clamps and chrome; mix the soda with a mild, biodegradable dishwashing soap to clean wheels and tires; for windows, mix white vinegar or lemon juice with water.

Spills

Prepare and use easy to find spill containment and cleanup kits. Include safety equipment and cleanup materials appropriate to the type and quantity of materials that could spill.

Pour kitty litter, sawdust or cornmeal on spills.

Fluids

Your customer's regular car maintenance prevents fluids from leaking onto streets and washing into storm drains. It is also good for business.

Change fluids carefully. Use a drip pan to avoid spills.

Prevent fluid leaks from stored vehicles. Drain fluids such as unused gas, transmission and hydraulic oil, brake and radiator fluid from vehicles or parts kept in storage.

Implement simple work practices to reduce the chance of spills. Use a funnel when pouring liquids (like lubricants or motor oil) and place a tray underneath to catch spills. Place drip pans under the spouts of liquid storage containers. Clean up spills immediately.

Washing Vehicles



Prevent oil and grease, suspended solids and toxics from washing into storm drains:

Designate a washing site where water drains to the sewer system. The area must be paved and well marked as a wash area. Post signs prohibiting oil changes and washing solvents. Train all employees to use the designated area.

Wash vehicles with biodegradable, phosphate-free detergent. Use a bucket (not a running hose) to wash and rinse vehicles. This conserves and minimizes pointless personal pollution.

Fueling Vehicles

Gas and diesel spills are common when fueling vehicles. To minimize pollution:

Design fueling areas so that all spills are contained and runoff cannot carry spills into storm drains. Spills should be directed to a containment area that allows for proper treatment and disposal.



Cover the fueling area to keep rain from washing away spilled materials. Extend the cover several feet beyond the containment area.

Keep absorbent materials on-site to allow prompt cleanup of all spills.

Post signs instructing people not to overfill gas tanks. Overfilling causes spills and vent gas fumes into the air.

Recycle

Recycle what you can:



- Metal scraps
- Used tires, paper and cardboard
- Glass, aluminum, and tin
- Water-based paints

Contacts



To report a spill, learn about waste disposal or report illegal dumping please contact your local public works department.

KY Transportation Cabinet adapted work by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection.